



SNAP TO READ

## TEXT-BASED LEARNING (TBL) TO ACTIVATE ADULT EFL LEARNERS IN LEARNING ENGLISH: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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### **Abstract:**

*In response to the fact that college students complain on their unsuccessful story of their EFL learning experience such as the limited number of vocabulary, English Grammar confusion, low competence of English language skills, this article explores an alternative effective way of helping them to improve their English through Text-Based Learning (TBL) model. This article is then intended to narrate the implementation of TBL to teach English for college students of non English Department of Post Graduate Program of State Islamic Institute of Tulungagung, Indonesia. The result of implementing this teaching model proves to be able to not only stimulate joyful learning atmosphere but to attract the students' active participation during the EFL instructional process as well. This further brings about their better practical understanding on English language skills as their expectation. Therefore, for English lecturers, this model is pedagogically good to be implemented in their English instructional practices.*

**Keywords:** *Text-based leaning, to activate, adult EFL learners*

EFL instruction in Indonesia is in one hand showing successful story that the EFL learners can achieve good/excellent English skills. Iftanti (2015) in her study for example found that among Indonesian EFL learners, there

are some EFL college students who successfully established good habits in reading English for some factors such as personal, social, cultural, and technological factors. In addition, there are some successful stories which generally state that the success of EFL instruction is reported to be influenced by the appropriateness of the use of teaching techniques and or teaching media with the students' need. Teaching writing using comic strips through Process-Genre Based Approach (PGBA), for example, is proved to be able to successfully improve students' ability in writing if the stories used are appropriate with the EFL learners and the teacher's guidance during the writing process is sufficient (Megawati & Anugerahwati, 2012). Student teachers' writing ability in English can be developed by using Systemic Functional Linguistic Genre Pedagogy (SFL GP) (Emilia & Hamied, 2015). There is also a study demonstrating the successful learners of Senior High School in their writing skill that was identified by having used more learning strategies than the ones who are not successful (Mistar et.al., 2014). However, those research reports which demonstrate successful stories of EFL instruction only occurs in some certain contexts of teaching and learning English.

On the other hand, there are also some unhappy stories which tell that although they have learnt English from their early age, they are not good at their English competence. Many EFL Learners in Indonesia suffer from difficulties since the language environment does not support them and no unified national system of English education in Indonesia (Huda, 2016). There are also some substantial unconstructive influences of the EFL Indonesian students' cultures and the non-conducive language environment which continuously challenge the English language teaching and bring about negative impact of the learning outcomes (Marcellino, 2015).

In response to the fact that EFL instruction in Indonesia does not work as being expected, EFL teachers need to sustainably work on innovating a joyful instructional model which leads to the success story of the EFL teaching and learning. As the result of need analysis done through questioning and interviewing the college students of Post Graduate Program of State

Islamic Institute of Tulungagung, it is found that even though they have learnt English since their elementary level of education -as mostly done by Indonesians EFL students- they keep having too many problems in English which is related with vocabulary as in line with studies done by Fauzan & Yusuf, 2016; Zuraini, & Yusuf, 2016; grammar which is also parallel with Miftah (2016) who demonstrates EFL students' grammatical problems in their writing products. Moreover, the preliminary study also found that those post graduates EFL students of non English department also had problems and confusion in understanding English tenses and how to use those tenses in a real context. This fact supports a study done by Salikin, 2015 which reveals the EFL adult learners' perception on their failure in the mastery of tenses. In addition, from the written diagnostic test of writing a simple paragraph about their expectation of learning English and oral test about introducing themselves and their future dream, it was indicated that they competence of English skills is considered low. This factual condition is in line with a study conducted by Megawati et.al. (2016). which demonstrates EFL problems in English language skills. Many of the EFL learners who have learnt English did not shape their mastery of tenses and aspects. Meanwhile, what they expect in their learning English is that they want to be able to speak, write, and read in English well without having too much difficulties in terms of vocabulary and grammar. This fact mostly brings those EFL adult learners about keeping silent during classroom instruction and making them be not motivated to learn English.

Accordingly, it is necessary to implement teaching strategy which is helpful and attracting them to be more actively participated during EFL instructional process. As a result, this hopefully leads to create a joyful learning atmosphere which will further trigger the EFL learners' active involvement and participation during the EFL instructional process. Studies reveal that joyful and interesting learning atmosphere is importantly able to smoothly and naturally improve the EFL students' English competence (Anwar & Muhamad, 2016; Aslan & Rasouli, 2013; Singh, 2014; and

Nurhayati, 2012).

There are many ways to create interesting learning atmosphere. By considering that college students of post graduate Program which are classified as adult learners have more learning experience- i.e. more reading practices-, it is believed that using their own learning experience is meaningful to help them to improve their English vocabulary, grammar, and the other skills of a language such as listening, speaking, and writing as well. Teaching critical reading strategies as stated by Khabiri & Pakzad (2012) proved to have a significant effect on intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary retention. This indicates that reading has positive effect to help students improving their vocabulary. Moreover, Anjomshoa and Zamanian (2014) in their study found positive relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. In addition, critical literacy and language skills development can be positively integrated (Huang, 2011). It is further demonstrated that fostering improvement in word knowledge through wide reading is potential for fostering the improvement in speaking skills (Mart, 2012). From the above mentioned empirical proofs, it can be sum up that text is then considered powerful for the EFL adult learners to improve their language skills, vocabulary, and grammar competence.

In accordance with the previous explanation, it can be stated that implementing "Text-Based Learning" as one of the alternative models of teaching is believed to be significant to help the adult EFL learners to improve their English competence. This article is therefore intended to describe the implementation of Text-Based Learning (TBL) model to help EFL adult learners to improve their active participation during classroom English instruction, improve their motivation in learning English since they are able to be involved in the leaning process, create interesting learning atmosphere and specifically improve their English competence.

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

This study was conducted at Post Graduate Program of State Islamic Institute of Tulungagung. The subjects involved in this study are about 2 classes of 40 students majoring in Islamic Religion Education, 1 class of 15 students majoring in Management of Islamic Education, and 1 class of 7 students majoring in Islamic Philosophy. The total 62 participants participated in this study. They took English subject and learned English for the whole semester which is about 16 meetings including Midterm Test and Final Test. During 14 meetings the students were taught by using Text-Based Learning model of teaching. The evaluation of implementing this model was done through on going assessment. This means that the score was taken in each step of this teaching model. For the step of Student-Self Vocabulary Notes, the score was taken from the individual oral vocabulary test conducted by the end of the semester based on the learners' pocket dictionary. Meanwhile, the learners' score of grammar which was taken in the step of Grammar in Context was done giving them grammar test based grammatical matters inspired from the passage they have read. The learners' scores of Reading Comprehension was taken by giving them some reading comprehension tests either in written or orally based on the texts they have read in the step of Reading Comprehension. Besides, the learners speaking ability was assessed through Text Based Speaking by means of conducting Frozen Picture performance with which speaking practices can be done among the learners with my guidance (as the lecturer). Moreover, the students' writing ability was assessed during the step of Text-Based Writing by means of assigning them reviewing some journal articles, doing mini research, and writing abstract accordingly. Finally, the improvement of the participants' English competence can be obtained from the above mentions types of assessment.

Procedures of Text-Based Learning (Tbl) Model Of Teaching EFL Adult Learners

In implementing this TBL model of teaching English for the EFL adult

learners, I mainly make use of an English text as a tool to learn English Grammar and vocabulary, to improve speaking, reading, and writing skill, and to increase the number of vocabulary, in addition to create a more classroom involvement among the learners. The text is selected based on the students' major studies such as Management of Islamic Education, Science of Islamic Elementary Education, Education of Islamic Religion, and Philosophy of Religion. This model comprises some ways namely Students Self Vocabulary Notes (SSVN), Grammar in Context (GiC), Reading Comprehension (RC), Text-Based Speaking (TBS), and Text-Based Writing (TBW).

Concerning with vocabulary, the selected texts - I did it for my adult learners so that they learn the same materials- will be used by each learner as the written source to find new English vocabulary. Each student writes his/her own new words and classify types of the words they found in the text they are reading. They are assigned to alphabetically order those words and provide themselves with part of speech which I have already explained in advance and the meaning of the selected words. To decide what part of speech of the selected words, they can consult English dictionaries. By the end the semester, each student is assigned to bundle it into an English pocket dictionary which is further used as the materials of oral vocabulary test. This step of learning vocabulary is then called as Student Self Vocabulary Notes (SSVN).

In addition, by having read the same text during the learning process, those adult learners are guided to simultaneously learn Grammar in Context (GiC). This is done to help them to understand the grammatical rules and the way to use them in context, so that it is hopefully more meaningful. Following the explanation of some certain rules of English language grammar is grammar exercises which can be in the form of sentence error analysis and sentence construction by using the grammatical rules they have just learnt. In doing the grammar exercises, they can sometimes work in pairs and in some other time they work in a group of three. This means that they collaborate and cooperate with their peers to reach their real understanding on English

grammatical rules. They do peer revision and feed back. Those who do not well understand the grammatical rules implemented in a sentence, they can not classify the error and give any revision or feed back. This demands their active participation in doing grammar exercises.

Related to Reading Comprehension (RC), the learners are firstly assigned to do some pre reading activities such as answering questions leading to an understanding of the text. I developed those pre-reading question myself. Subsequently, they are assigned to read the text loudly to check either their pronunciation or reading comprehension through which I can guide them the way to pronounce correctly and to read strategically using reading strategies. Following this activity, to check their reading comprehension, the learners are assigned to answer some comprehension questions concerning with the text. The questions are started form the simplest one- True and False Question. With such a type of question, they will only state whether the statement is correct based on the text. After that they will do Short-Answer Question (ASQ). Such type of question is developed gradually from explicit questions to implicit ones, so that the learners will not be trapped in difficulties to answer this reading comprehension question, because they start from the easiest one. The activities of reading can be varied in accordance to the learners' level of English competence. What I did is in the first three Reading Comprehension activities, I mostly guide the learners' reading activities in order to teach how to strategically comprehend English texts which sometimes started from initial reading that emphasizes on the ways of reading e.g. intonation and pausing, up to implementing reading strategies. In the following meetings, I let them to have Reading Group Competition (RGC) by dividing them into two groups which consist of ten students. Each group is assigned to read the text and develop a T/F quiz consisting of ten items in accordance to the text. This means that after reading the text, each member of the group develops one T/F statement. All groups are assigned to complete this task in a limited time i.e 20 minutes, so that they have to work strategically. After all done, the competition starts. Each group read the

question for the other group to be answered. If the group correctly answers the question, they get 1 point, but if they can not answer the question, they get 0 point. The group which can collect more scores than the other group will be the winner. I lead this activity and record their score. They are sometimes given TOEFL test which focus on doing Reading and Vocabulary section. As a result, if later they do Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary section of TOEFL test, they will hopefully not find too many difficulties. This is because they have to take TOEFL test as the requirement of programming Thesis Proposal Writing. Accordingly, what the learners do in this English course will be more meaningful to support the improvement of the adult EFL language learners' English competence.

The other activity included in this model is Text-Based Speaking (TBS). In doing this activity, the learners are invited to decide the theme of text they have read. Subsequently, they are assigned to perform speaking through creating "Frozen Picture" (FP). In doing this FP, the learners are divided into groups which consist of 5 members. Each group creates a series of motion concerning with theme approved by themselves. They should do it in secret because at the end of the performance the other groups will guess the plot of their motions and what the frozen motion based story about. To do this FP, the representative of each group will take a lottery to decide the order of the performance. Then the group getting the first lottery should first perform in front of the class. Each member of the group should be in a frozen motion and all frozen motion will create a series of frozen picture representing plot of a story about the decided theme among the learners themselves. They will be in their frozen picture after all audiences count back "3, 2, 1, Go". They will stay in frozen for a certain period of time- 5 minutes at average- so that the other groups can guess what story they perform. During those 5 minutes, I guide the audiences to have speaking practices by asking several question on their peers' frozen motion. For example:" Look at her hand position (I point at one of the performers)...why it looks begging something to this boy?"; Look at his face expression, what happen to him?"; Look at this leg



position, what is he going to do?" The questions are addressed to each member of following group to perform. The other groups should also pay attention, because they will have chance to guess the plot of the performed frozen picture if the appointed group can not successfully do it. After 5 minutes they are in frozen, all audiences will again count down "1,2,3, MELT and GET RELAX". Everybody gives big applause. After that, it is time for the appointed group to guess. If the group can correctly guess the plot, they will get 1 point. If they can not guess so the chance is given to the other groups to guess and it is given to the fastest member of any group that raises the hand. So, a group with the highest score is the winner. I then record their score. Such a group work based speaking practices using Frozen Picture requires each learner to actively participate and cooperate.

Finally, in relation to Text-Based-Writing (TBW), the learners are invited to read their own selected texts on their own interesting topics. Then they are assigned to summarize those texts. It is suggested that they read research report articles which are useful for them as ideas to do future research. Therefore, in doing this TBW, the learners are assigned to do a mini research. The summaries of the texts are then used as reference. After doing the mini research, the students only write the abstract of their research reports. This is intended to check how much the students apply some grammatical rules (i.e. simple present tense, past tense, active passive voices, conditional if, and adjective-active) which they have learnt in a real context. This activity takes about a half of the semester that is mostly done in outside the classroom practices. The students and I make an agreement on the schedule time to bring the abstracts to the class and will have both peer revision and lecturer revision. This model of instruction again challenges the EFL adult learners to be more active to participate in the EFL instruction.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

There are some important findings that can be noted from the result of implementing this Text Based Learning (TBL) model of EFL

instruction through several above mentioned learning activities, e.i. Students Self Vocabulary Notes (SSVN), Grammar in Context (GiC), Reading Comprehension (RC), Text-Based Speaking (TBS), and Text-Based Writing (TBW).

The first, the EFL adult learners' vocabulary number is getting increased from having read some texts in English. The text read is the one which mainly about the topics of their own major studies with the consideration that they will have sufficient background knowledge on the reading text so that it will be more helpful to comprehend the text. Still, those who find some difficulties in terms of vocabulary, they can put them down and look them up in their dictionary. As a result, they gain new vocabulary anytime they have reading practices. Through reading, they are engaged in doing a repeatedly practice of the same vocabulary such as selecting difficult words, finding out their meaning, and writing them down. This means that they unintentionally memorize the words through those repeatedly process. This indicates that reading comprehension on English texts of the EFL learners own topics is beneficial to increase their own vocabulary number without intentionally memorize the new words. This research finding supports a study conducted by Webb et.al. (2013) which states that a collocations can be learned incidentally through reading while listening to a graded reader and (b) the number of encounters has a positive effect on learning. In short, passage comprehension has a significant role in lexical gain and retention (Pulido, 2004; Khabiri & Pakzad, 2012). Moreover, vocabulary gains through reading and listening to multiple texts were high (Webb & Chang, 2015), and students engaging in extensive reading have better vocabulary learning than those who are engaged with reading extensively (Chin-Neng, et.al.2013).

Subsequently, by having read English texts, their understanding on parts of speech is getting better as well. The ability of identifying parts of speech in English is very advantageous to extend their knowledge on vocabulary, grammar, writing, speaking, and reading. This fact can be seen that the result of students' need analysis done in the first meeting of the

course by means of asking them to write down their difficulties in learning English so far and their expectation of learning English during the semester is not satisfying. Most of them claimed themselves as having a very limited number of vocabularies. Therefore, they expect to increase the number of their vocabularies which is essential as the underlying basis to be able to speak English, to write in English, and to comprehend English reading texts. By putting down their own difficult new words from the texts they have read, or it is called as Student Self Vocabulary Notes (SSVN) which is alphabetically organized to be an English student pocket dictionary, they recognize, comprehend, and know how to use those words in context. The learners' increasing number of vocabulary is proved from the result of the oral individual vocabulary test conducted based on their own SSVN. Most of them can mention the meanings of some words taken at random from their own SSVN during their oral vocabulary test. This means that their vocabulary number is getting increased during the implementation of Text-Based Learning. The present study provides the same result as a study by Deacon, et.al. 2014 which demonstrates that children's early morphological awareness partially explained children's gains in reading comprehension, and their early reading comprehension partially explained their gains in morphological awareness. Although the studies were done in a different context, they prove that text and vocabulary acquisitions strengthen each other. Word-to-text integration processes are causal components in comprehension skill (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014) and reading is most strongly linked to progress in vocabulary (Sullivan & Brown, 2015).

The second finding is that the adult college learners' understanding about some certain grammatical rules is getting better. In the first meeting, they find some difficulties in constructing sentences which are grammatically correct. However, after several times learning grammatical rules mainly on simple present tense, past tense, active and passive voices, and conditional "if" from the texts they have learned which I called it as learning Grammar in Context (GiC), they are gradually able to construct grammatically and

logically correct sentences. It is proved that reading (extensively) brings about positive gains in grammar knowledge (Lee, et.al., 2015). What they did was not only to construct their own sentence in English but they were also able to check and revise their peers' sentences. This way demonstrates a successful effort of improving their grammatical competence, because by having peer review and peer feed back, the students' grammatical competence is also getting improved. This is due to the fact that since they make themselves be more involved in implementing their grammar knowledge among their own peers after taking a look at the sentence pattern available in the text they have read. This supports the study conducted by Iraj, et.al (2016) which reveals that the use of self- and peer-assessments significantly affected the writing ability of the learners. This has also been proved from their Text Based Writing (TBW) practice which results in writing an abstract of their mini research in English. This finding indicates that Text Based Learning has proved to be meaningful to help EFL learners to improve their writing skill. This finding of this present research is parallel with a study conducted by Al-Mansour (2014) which shows that (extensive) reading program may have a significant positive effect on the learners' writing performance and it also contributes to a shift in students' ability from writing fragmented and spoken-like language to more literate written narratives (Damayanti, 2017). Moreover, it was found that learning English through this activity makes the learners more actively participate in learning grammar and are not anymore confused about the rules of some English grammar.

The third important point is that through Text Based Speaking (TBS) done by performing Frozen Picture technique, the adult speaking practices are getting better and their classroom involvement during the process of the EFL teaching and learning is also getting more active. All individuals take actively part in their learning process by implementing this Frozen Picture teaching technique, so that classroom environment becomes more live and interesting for them to try speaking in English. The topic performed through this technique is inspired from English texts that the adult learners have just

read. It can be simply taken from the words or the expression in the texts. Take for example, if there is a word “agree” in the text being read, so, the learners would make a series of motion story by each member of the group in a frozen condition about agreement and disagreement in a certain period of time such as 3 minutes without motion. Then the audiences that are appointed to work in groups- with the lecturer’s guidance- would make guessing game. The game done by conducting Question and Answer between the audiences and I as a classroom teacher is intended to guess what story reflected in their frozen picture is. With this kind of learning technique and the text inspiration, the EFL learners and the lecturer relationship is not anymore in a far distance and this contributes to reduce the gap between them, so that psychologically, the learners feel more relax which further results in arousing willingness to practice speaking. This is parallel with a study which implies that one of the factors which is believed to help minimize students’ anxiety level is close relationship between the teacher and the student in class (Padmadewi, 2016). In addition, the adult EFL learners are getting more involved in their speaking English because they can successfully create interesting learning atmosphere by themselves. They are not anymore hesitate to speak English, they are not anymore shy to speak English, they are not anymore afraid of making mistake. Marwan in his study (2016) found that fear of failing the class is the primary cause of the EFL learners’ anxiety. This present study shows that when the EFL learners are able to control their anxiety, fear, and shy because of the successful effort of creating joyful classroom learning atmosphere. Therefore, they have sufficient self confidence to speak in English. This finding supports the previous studies conducted by Peng (2012) and Riasati, M. J. (2012) which demonstrates that one of several factors underlying classroom Willingness To Communicate (WTC) is classroom environment. Classroom atmosphere is proved to be an important factor to the degree of the EFL learners’ willingness to speak. As being found in the present study that the EFL adult learners are not anymore reluctant to speak in a stress-free environment where there is a friendly and unstressful condition

created between the teacher and the learners. They do not only keep sitting, but make some physical movement which is helpful to relax their body as well and at the same time the text that they are reading is inspiring for their English practices.

A dynamic classroom environment either physical (preparing appropriate seat arrangement for example) and non physical (preparing learning activities such as by pairing them with students or grouping them that are lower performing or struggling with the specific content) plays significant role in affecting students' learning (Hannah, 2013). Thus, supportive learning atmosphere is proved to be able to create successful learners since they become more motivated during their classroom learning process (Astuti, 2016). They are not anymore keeping silent in their classroom speaking practices. Each of them dares to speak up although only a word. Their willing to speak up is positively affected by interesting and joyful. They perceive their learning activities as interesting and joyful with this Frozen Picture model of instruction. As a result their learning achievement seems to get improved because they become more motivated to get involved in the instructional activities and to get in charge of their own learning. As in line with Alharbi (2015) who found that EFL students' speaking proficiency can improved if they are positioned in their own learning. As one of the learning environment, classroom atmosphere plays important role to motivate the EFL learners learning English. As being stated by William & William (2011) in their research report that one of the ingredients which impacts student motivation is environment. Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh (2015) in their study also reveal that if students perceive their classroom activities as challenging, interesting, and joyful with various options to choose a particular task, their first priority would be adapting mastery goal orientation, i.e., they desire to learn a foreign language for enhancing their knowledge, not for the sake of getting good marks or being judged incompetent relative to others.

In a nutshell, the above mentioned learning activities included in this Text Based Learning (TBL) model of teaching English for the EFL adult

learners who encounter several problems concerning with vocabulary, grammar, and English skills are proved to be helpful to create joyful learning activities which then bring about meaningful way of activating their EFL learning interest and reducing their anxiety. As a result, their English competence will gradually improve as their expectation. By implementing this TBL teaching and learning model, the EFL learners becomes the center of English instruction during their classroom activities. Some studies have proved the effectiveness of student-centered method of teaching. Learner centered instruction was stated to be more effective than teacher-centered instruction in improving EFL learners' reading comprehension performance (Lak, & Parvaneh, 2017) and stimulate students' critical thinking abilities (Marijic & Romfelt, 2016).

## CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

There is a three-folded point revealed from the implementation of a Text Based Learning (TBL) which consists of Students Self Vocabulary Notes (SSVN), Grammar in Context (GiC), Reading Comprehension (RC), Text-Based Speaking (TBS), and Text-Based Writing (TBW). Firstly, the adults EFL learners' vocabulary number is getting increased simultaneously with the improvement of their grammatical rule mainly on the identification of parts of speech of the words they have selected from the passages they have read. Secondly, the increasing number of vocabulary contributes to the improvement of their English skills namely speaking and reading comprehension. By increasing number of vocabulary and their chance of expressing their idea orally is becoming bigger and their reading comprehension is also getting better. In addition, both the increasing number of vocabulary and the improvement of the grammar competence is helpful to construct grammatically and logically correct sentences in English. This means that TBL significantly contribute to the improvement of the EFL students' writing skills. Thirdly, the positive effect of implementing TBL instructional model as whole leads to creating joyful learning atmosphere

which further build motivation among the EFL adult learners to learn English. If they are motivated to learn English, they will feel free to get involved in the teaching and learning instruction, so that they will get better improvement in their English competence. Therefore, the three folded point contributes each other and this means that teaching EFL adult learners by using Text Based Teaching model which comprises some types of instructional activities is believed to be worthy for improving their English achievement. Accordingly, it can be pedagogically applicable to any EFL adult learners sharing common characteristics with the learners involved in this study that are the ones having reading experience and skill of initial reading texts or passages written in English. However, this TBL model of teaching will not be applicable for elementary school students because this is doubtfully hard for them to learn independently and cooperatively.

## **LIMITATION AND SUGGESTION**

This study is only as a narrative inquiry of my impressive story on the implementation of Text Based Learning (TBL) model of teaching English as a Foreign Language for adult EFL learners. This was conducted for the sake of helping my adult college learners to solve their problems in learning English and guiding them chasing their expectation of being good in English at least for the sake of writing their upcoming abstract of their thesis and of doing TOEFL test as one of the requirements of proposing research for their thesis. The results of this study cannot by all means be generalized; however, others in similar situations can benefit from them. Thus, I recommend that this seemingly successful story need to be more scientifically proved by doing further research namely experimental research in order to know how much important and how much effective is this TBL model to teach adult EFL learners who have sufficient experience in reading practices. The future researchers are also suggested to do further research on Classroom Action Research in order to prove that this TBL model of EFL teaching is seriously able to solve the adult EFL learners' problems during their classroom learning



such as grammar confusion, lack number of English vocabulary, speaking and writing skills as well.

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